

The Bookshop of Second Chances



JACKIE FRASER

A Letter from Jackie Fraser

Dear Reader,

The Bookshop of Second Chances is my first published book, and I can't tell you how excited I am to think that people thousands of miles away might choose to read it for their book club. I know that for a lot of readers the setting—both broadly “Scotland” and more specifically the bookshop itself—is very appealing, so let me tell you a bit about how I came to write it.

My partner and I were on holiday, staying in an old farmhouse, Barholm, that looks out over Wigtown Bay. We'd travelled up to Scotland to look at prehistoric sites, which is the main impetus for pretty much all our holidays. Cairn Holy, the “famous burial chamber” mentioned by Thea, is just a couple of fields away. Usually when we go to Scotland the places we visit are much wilder and emptier than the rural scenery of Dumfries and Galloway. It's not majestic, but it is full of interest, with many ruined castles and an intricate coastline, and I found all the little towns strung out along the main A75 road rather intriguing.

I'd been thinking for a while about writing about someone in their mid-forties, as I think older women in books sometimes get short-changed. After all, you always feel the same in your head, and a “starting again” story always has lots of potential.

I started writing there and then, on about the third day of the holiday, and Thea came to me pretty much complete. As soon as I thought of the bookshop as a setting, I knew it was perfect. I love bookshops, of course, and secondhand bookshops are often run by people who might, perhaps, not otherwise be engaged in retail. This gives lots of scope for interesting characters. And as soon as I'd imagined Fortescue's Books, the details of which were inspired by every second hand and antiquarian bookshop I've ever been lucky enough to poke about in, I could picture exactly what Edward was like.

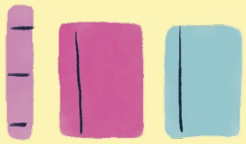
I gave him a title that he'd renounced for a number of reasons, firstly because, like Thea, I'm both fascinated and repelled by people who can name their ancestors for the last five hundred years, and secondly as a nod to Georgette Heyer, one of my favourite writers, whose books are jammed with lords. So when people ask me what the book's about, as well as saying “older people” and also “starting again,” it is, like more or less everything ever written by an English person, about class.

One of my favourite things about writing the book was imagining Thea and Edward's conversations. I never knew quite what they might say and found them both quite entertaining company. I hope you do too, and that, if you ever get the chance to visit Scotland, you don't skip the Lowlands on your way to Edinburgh or the more dramatic scenery further north.

Happy reading!

Jackie





Discussion Questions



- 1) The setting of the Scottish coast is intrinsic to this book. Discuss the ways in which the setting functions as a character in the novel and how each of the human characters relates to it.
- 2) What specific themes does the author emphasize throughout the novel? What do you think she is trying to get across to the reader?
- 3) How do Thea and Edward change, grow, or evolve throughout the course of the story? What events trigger such changes?
- 4) What do you think the author's purpose was in writing this book? What ideas was she trying to get across?
- 5) What did you think about the ending—were you satisfied or disappointed with it? How do you picture the Thea and Edward's lives after the story closes?
- 6) How did this book change you? Do you have a new perspective as a result of reading it? Did you learn something you didn't know before? Has your attitude or behavior changed?
- 7) Did the story unfold the way you expected? If not, what surprised you?
- 8) What did you think of the writing? Are there any standout sentences? What are some passages that you underlined, or that particularly affected you?
- 9) What was your initial reaction to the book? Did it hook you immediately, or take some time to get into?
- 10) Which character did you relate to the most, and what was it about them that you connected with?



Playlist

Some tracks you might find in Edward's record collection, or on the CDs littered untidily in Thea's car.

April Skies

by The Jesus & Mary Chain

Famous Blue Raincoat

by Leonard Cohen

Mushroom

by Can

(There's a Jesus & Mary Chain cover of this which would be where Edward first heard it.)

Sunshine Lollipops

by Lesley Gore

Deanna

by Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds

Planet Caravan

by Esben and the Witch

(This is a cover of a Black Sabbath song.)

Bela Lugosi's Dead

by Bauhaus

Oh! You Pretty Things

by David Bowie

Come as You Are

by Nirvana

Guns of Brixton

by The Clash

The First Big Weekend

by Arab Strap

Gimme Shelter

by The Rolling Stones

Toxygene

by The Orb

Cream

by Prince

Big Time Sensuality

by Björk

Food List

Some snacks inspired by or mentioned in the novel



Mozerella ball w/ minted pea puree

Crab and spinach quiche

Spicy prawns in panko breadcrumbs

Smoked salmon and cream cheese pinwheels

Quail Scotch eggs

Asparagus with Parma ham

Figs with goats' cheese

Cheese straws

Guacamole and tortilla chips

Pecan-stuffed dates (vegan)

Hummus and crudités (vegan)



Books mentioned in *The Bookshop of Second Chances*



Fiction

The Lord Peter Wimsey books by Dorothy L. Sayers
(specifically *The Five Red Herrings*, which is mostly set in Creetown and Kirkcudbright, not far from Baldochrie.)

Devoted Ladies and *Good Behaviour* by Molly Keane

Collected works of Charles Dickens

Collected works of William Shakespeare

Cocaine Nights, *Concrete Island*, and *High-Rise*
by J.G. Ballard

Ivanhoe, *Heart of Midlothian*, *Guy Mannering*, and *Waverley*
by Sir Walter Scott

The Folio Society's Jane Austen collection

Collected works of George Eliot

Collected works of Anthony Trollope

1984 and *Down and Out in Paris and London*
by George Orwell

The Lives of Christopher Chant by Diana Wynne Jones

The Noddy books and *The Famous Five* by Enid Blyton

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll

The Harry Potter books by J.K. Rowling

Mills & Boon novels (Mills & Boon is a prolific publisher of romantic fiction)

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë

Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier

Nonfiction

The Principia by Sir Isaac Newton

Poetry & Plays

Collected Poems of John Donne

Collected Poems of Robert Burns

The Revenger's Tragedy by Thomas Middleton

Paradise Lost by John Milton

Childe Harold's Pilgrimage by Lord Byron

Cartoons

The works of Norman Thelwell



Photos from the Author

